

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MILAN 00542 072103Z
ACTION SS-15

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FM AMCONSUL MILAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5944
AMEMBASSY ROME

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EO 11652: NA
TAGS: ASEC
SUBJECT: FOREIGN MADE ARMORED CARS FOR MILAN

- A. FINA LETTER TO THOMAS OF 25 OCT 1974;
- B. 76 MILAN 1297;
- C. EMBASSY ROME MEMORANDUM TO DEPT 17 OCT 1977;
- D. ROME 3557

FOR DEPUTY UNDERSECRETARY READ

1. I WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR CONSIDERING OUR LONG STANDING
REQUEST FOR LOCALLY BUILT AND FULLY ARMORED CARS TO REPLACE
US BUILT AND PARTIALLY ARMORED CARS NOW PROVIDED.

2. OUR IMPRESSION IS THAT THE OPERATIONAL SUPPORT SIDE
OF DEPT IS NOT HEARING THE DATA REACHING THE
GEOGRAPHIC BUREAU SIDE OF THE DEPT FROM THIS AREA.
ON THE POLITICAL SIDE, WE HAVE BEEN DOCUMENTING
A CONTINUED RISE IN CIVIL VIOLENCE IN OUR AREA. THERE
IS NO SIGN THAT IT HAS PEAKED. THEREFORE, WE HAVE
URGED AND THE AMBASSADOR HAS CONCURRED THAT WE BE
PROVIDED BETTER VEHICLE PROTECTION TO MINIMIZE OUR
RISK. THE MORO KIDNAPPING AND THE MURDER OF HIS FIVE
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PAGE 02 MILAN 00542 072103Z

BODY GUARDS ALL RIDING IN UNARMORED CARS AND THE
REPEATED DELCARATIONS BY THE TERRORIST ORGANIZATION OF
WARFARE AGAINST THE MULTINATIONAL IMPERIALIST STATE,
SEEM TO ME TO CONFIRM THE LEGITAMACY OF OUR REQUESTS
AND THE SOUNDNESS OF THE EMBASSY'S ENDORSEMENT OF IT.

3. I BELIEVE THAT IF YOUR OFFICE WILL CONSIDER THE

MERITS OF THE CASE, YOU WILL REACH CONCLUSIONS SIMILAR TO OUR OWN.

4. IN ORDER TO FACILITATE YOUR CONSIDERATION, I WILL RESUME' THE CASE BELOW.

5. WE BELIEVE THAT ITALIAN BUILT VEHICLES SHOULD REPLACE SOME, AT LEAST, OF OUR CAR POOL FOR THREE MAIN REASONS.

A. FIRST IS SECURITY. AMERICAN CARS ARE OUT OF PLACE IN THIS AREA BECAUSE THEY ARE ALL OSTENTATIIOUSLY AND PROVOCATIVELY LARGE. THEY INVITE ATTENTION AND HOSTILITY ON CITY STREETS. MOREOVER, THEY ARE ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO MANEUVER IN THE NARROW STREETS OF MILAN. EVASIVE MANEUVERS IN THE CITY ARE INCONCEIVABLE. NOR IS THEIR ARMORING REASSURING TO THE DRIVERS OR PASSENGERS. THE BODY ARMOR IS PROBABLY SUFFICIENT IF ALL AREAS ARE SHIELDED. WE BELIEVE THEY ARE NOT. THE GLASS AREAS MIGHT RESIST GUN FIRE BUT THE MOUNTINGS FOR THE PLASTIC PANELS ARE NOT VERY CONVINCING. MOREOVER, THERE IS A SEVERE SAFETY HAZARD IN THIS CLIMATE SINCE THE DOUBLE PANES FOG AND CANNOT BE CLEANED. WE RUN AS MUCH OF A RISK OF BEING KILLED IN AN ACCIDENT AS BEING SHOT* WORSE STILL, THE WIDE WINDSHIELD IS NOT PROTECTED AT ALL AND THE DRIVERS, WHO ARE NOT HIRED TO BE HEROS, KNOW THE RISK VERY WELL. IN A CRISIS, THEY ARE UNLIKELY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 MILAN 00542 072103Z

TO DRIVE THROUGH A HAIL OF BULLETS WHILE WE PASSENGERS CROUCH ON THE FLOOR.

B. SECOND, THE MAINTENANCE OF AMERICAN MADE CARS IS A TREMENDOUS PROBLEM HERE. THE NEAREST SERVICE FACILITY (A MILITARY BASE AT VICENZA) IS TWO HOURS DISTANT AND IT RARELY HAS THE PROPER PARTS. MOREOVER, LOCAL MECHANICS WILL NOT EVEN RAISE THE HOODS OF OUR CARS. THE LOSS OF A SINGLE SCREW, SPRING OR GASKET IMMOBILIZES A LARGE VEHICLE, CONSUMING THEIR SCARSE GARAGE SPACE FOR WEEKS OR MONTHS WHILE A REPLACEMENT IS SECURED. THE RESULT OF THIS MAINTENANCE SITUATION IS UNJUSTIFIABLY HIGH COSTS IN MANPOWER AND DOWN TIME. FUEL CONSUMPTION DURING A PERIOD WHEN WE ARE TRYING TO CONSERVE PETROLEUM AND ECONOMIZE IS ALSO A GENUINE CONSIDERATION.

C. THIRD, THE PURCHASE COST OF A FULLY ARMORED LOCALLY BUILT CAR WITH AROUND THE CORNER SERVICING IS A SIGNIFICANTLY LESS THAN THE COST OF A SIMILARLY EQUIPPED US VEHICLE DELIVERED TO MILAN.

6. WE HAVE FULLY DOCUMENTED THIS SITUATION IN THE MANY

MESSAGES PREVIOUSLY SENT SOME OF WHICH ARE REFERENCED ABOVE.

7. MOST RECENTLY, SY HAS QUESTIONED THE ADEQUACY OF THE ARMORING PROPOSED BY THE LOCAL ARMORER. I AM CONVINCED THAT THE PROBLEM CAN BE EASILY CORRECTED (AND HAVE SUGGESTED HOW) IF THE DEPARTMENT WILL DECIDE THAT IT WISHES TO RESPOND TO OUR NEED.

8. TWO FINAL CONSIDERATIONS.

A. FIRST, THE LEAD TIME FOR PROCUREMENT IS LONG AND, WITH THE SHARP UPSWING IN VIOLENCE, GROWING LONGER. IT WOULD BE PRUDENT TO AUTHORIZE AT LEAST PROTOTYPE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 04 MILAN 00542 072103Z

PROCUREMENT PROMPTLY. THERE IS NO SIGN THAT THE SECURITY SITUATION IS IMPROVING AND MANY THAT IT WILL WORSEN.

B. SECOND, THE EXTENSIVE AND WISE SECURITY MEASURES TAKEN IN ROME TO PROTECT THE EMBASSY AND THE AMBASSADOR ARE DESIGNED TO CONVINCE TERRORISTS TO TURN ELSEWHERE. UNFORTUNATELY THAT ALSO MEANS TO SUBORDINATE POSTS LIKE MILAN WHICH MAY LOOK LIKE A SECOND BEST TARGET SYMBOLIZING MULTINATIONAL IMPERIALISM. WE HAVE STRENGTHENED OUR BUILDING SECURITY AS A RESULT. BUT OUR MOST VULNERABLE AREA REMAINS OUR TRANSPORTATION WHERE IMPROVEMENTS ARE ENTIRELY FEASIBLE BUT REQUIRE THE APPROVAL OF THE DEPT.FINA

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